

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Marian S. a resident of Newington. I apologize for no last name, but I understand that these testimonials will be published on-line and my last name is very distinctive, the story involves my adolescent child, and I don't want my child or myself recognizable "to the world" with what I'm about to tell you.

First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide my testimony about the impact of the proposed cuts to grant funds and Medicaid rates, and the alarming impact it would have on me and my family, and I'm certain my community. I've never written to government officials before, but this subject concerns a true lifeline, a salvation, and I have to express my heartfelt feedback and decidedly strong opinion.

Summarizing, I'm writing to you so that you know that without Wheeler Clinic's easy access to available *numerous* mental health programs, and their acceptance of Husky A with no premiums, copays or deductibles, my suicidal child would have been far, far worse for the last 2+ years, and I would have totally crumbled and been useless as a parent and to myself. Ultimately my child would have succeeded in committing suicide months ago, and I would have taken my life in devastating grief. There's absolutely no doubt in my mind about any of these.

I'm a divorced older mom, retired due to my disability of PTSD. Frugally, we barely make it on my disability check. Paying for insurance premiums, co-pays and deductibles would be totally out of my realm, meaning, we would not be able to seek sufficient mental health or medical care. My only child and I receive outpatient behavioral health services at Wheeler Clinic, and with our intense trauma from domestic violence, plus a number of years of school bullying, we have experienced just about all of the services Wheeler provides. You see, both my teenage child and I have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Major Chronic Depression, Generalized Anxiety, and Social Phobia/Anxiety, and my child also has significant trouble with social and educational environments, so there's significant school avoidance.

My child started therapy at an early age. By 5th grade passing thoughts of suicide became a regular event, though not talked about at the time. When my child first attempted suicide and was hospitalized, we used a number of Wheeler Clinic services: 211, Emergency Psychiatric Mobile Services, and after hospitalization we used IICAPS: Intensive In-Home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services, followed by weekly outpatient therapy, and eventually group therapy. The following year, 2014, there were six more suicide attempts and many suicide behaviors (overdosing, cutting, strangulation, etc.). During that year we utilized Wheeler's residential housing, intensive 6-month after-school group therapy twice. Every moment of every day was a true trial of dedication to get through this. But it was most definitely taking its toll on me. I was so drained from trying to maintain my child's LIFE, that I was holding myself up with toothpicks, and the next smallest thing would have sent me crashing. So I restarted my therapy, but at Wheeler, and eventually added group therapy. I chose Wheeler because I was impressed with them, and most critically, because they accepted my Husky A so I had no copays, otherwise I would not have received mental health services from anyone from anywhere. Now Wheeler Clinic is providing the next step in treatment to make both of us stronger and stable to live normal lives, free of suicide attempts, chronic trauma-driven deep depression and very high anxieties.

As one group member said, my anonymity in this letter speaks volumes: that I can't speak of this publicly, but can find total refuge within Wheeler Clinic's walls.

My closing remarks are these: when people come FIRST, not just in theory but in practical financial decisions, be it comprehensive mental health and medical care, or affordable insurance available for the vast majority of the population, our society becomes stronger, our emotional environment becomes more stable, our streets become safer, and there's suddenly hope for a truly brighter future for us, our children, and the masses. I know with all my heart that this is true for me and my child, along with so many in my network of friends and in my community. So I ask of you: don't cut budgets of these vital mental health services or lower Medicaid rates, which would diminish the availability of many needed mental health and medical services.